

To the Chairman and Members of the Hardingstone Rural District Council.

JANUARY, 1909.

GENTLEMEN,

I beg to present my Report for the year 1908, with the usual Tables. I have again assumed the population of the district to be equal to that of the previous year, though perhaps there may be a slight decrease as shown by the last census. I rather think the decrease does not continue: few houses are being built, but none are being demolished to any extent, and on the whole the two probably balance.

The total number of births during the year was only 150—nine less than in the previous year, which was then the lowest on record. The average number for the last ten years was 177, with a ratio per 1,000 of 22, whilst this year's ratio is only 19. I can only account for this decrease by supposing that it is chiefly the old people that are left in the villages, and that most of the young ones migrate into the town, where they get better wages and more amusement. Of the births, 83 were males and 67 females.

The total number of deaths in children under one year of age was 18, giving a ratio per 1,000 births registered of 120. This is a very high mortality, especially with such a low birth rate, and has only been exceeded three times in the last ten years. The average for the ten years is 15·5, with a ratio per 1,000 of 91·7. The causes of these deaths were—10 from premature birth or some wasting disease of childhood, 5 from pulmonary diseases as bronchitis or pneumonia, 1 from whooping cough, and 1 from tubercular disease. Excepting the pulmonary complaints and whooping cough these are hardly preventable diseases, but are probably due to sickly infants being fed on insufficient or improper food. It speaks well for the sanitary state of the district that there was not a single death from diarrhoea or other infectious disease (excluding whooping cough) amongst this class of children.

The total number of deaths at all ages was 104, which is the lowest for the last five years. This is a fairly favourable mortality, the average for 10 years being 106·4, with a mortality per 1,000 of 13·3; whilst the mortality of this year is 13, or rather below the average. No less than 18 of these deaths were in people over 80 years of age, which is certainly a large number, and seems to bear out my view that it is the old people that are chiefly left in these villages.

Table II. shows the births and deaths in the above three classes that have occurred in the whole district compared with those separately for the two sub-divisions and Workhouse. Regarding the latter, there are now 70 inmates, but 15 of them are boarders from the Northampton Workhouse or non-residents. The births in the Hardingstone sub-district were just above the average, so that the great falling off is in the Brafield sub-district, where there were 53 births against an average of 73 for the last ten years. Most of the villages in the Brafield district are farther from the town than those in the Hardingstone district, so that here are most of the old people again; whilst in Hardingstone and Wootton villages, at any rate, there is often keen competition for any vacant cottages from people working in the town. The deaths in the Hardingstone district were just about the average, whilst in Brafield district they were rather below—39 compared with an average of 43 for the ten years.

Table III. shows the number of infectious cases notified during the year. There was a total of 42 cases, but 26 of these were cases of chicken pox not notified as a rule in other localities, so that practically 16 cases of the chief infectious diseases were notified. This is practically the same number as in the last three years as shown by the following Table:—

1900	30 cases.	1904	90 cases.
1901	57 „	1905	52 „
1902	47 „	1906	15 „
1903	7 „	1907	14 „
1908		16 cases.	

Of these 16 cases, 7 were cases of scarlet fever, but fortunately this year it was of a much milder type and there was not a single death, whilst in the previous year there were 4 deaths in 10 cases. One case occurred in Brafield Village, whilst the other six were in Hardingstone and Wootton villages. The Brafield case was supposed to be a case of Influenza, but after some time it was found to be peeling, so certified then as scarlet fever : it lived in a lone cottage, so was not taken to the Hospital and there was no spread of the disease. The other cases could all trace their origin to contact with cases in other districts ; thus one case was contracted at Newport Pagnell, one at Northampton Barracks, one at Far Cotton, and the others at Northampton, where it has been very prevalent during the year. Five cases were removed to our Infectious Hospital and there treated.

Four cases of Diphtheria were notified during the year. One single case occurred at Hardingstone, but its origin could not be traced ; when first seen it seemed very severe and tracheotomy seemed probable, so it was at once removed to the Northampton General Hospital where it ultimately recovered, though the germs were discovered in the throat some time after he was comparatively convalescent. Two cases broke out almost simultaneously in Wootton, one of which proved fatal. The first case occurred in a visitor from Birmingham, and from this the second child contracted the disease. Fortunately the Isolation Hospital was empty at the time so we moved the whole family into it till the cottage had been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected. The fourth case of Diphtheria occurred in Workhouse yard at Milton and was very quickly fatal. This yard is never in a very sanitary state, but it was found that they had broken open and been using an old, filthy closet, and to this we attributed the outbreak. There was fortunately no spread of the disease.

Only one case of Enteric Fever was notified during the year, and this was at Roade. The man had been working away from home and came back with the disease, so its origin was doubtful. The closet next door was in a bad state but his own closet was in good order : both were cleaned out and the former drained in a more satisfactory manner. Unfortunately this case had a fatal termination.

The number of cases of chicken pox (26) was exactly the same as in the previous year. Eight were notified in the Hardingstone district, and eighteen in Brafield and Yardley Hastings villages.

Table IV. gives the causes of and ages at deaths during the year. Besides the infectious diseases already mentioned, there were 3 deaths from whooping cough in young children. There was only one death from diarrhoea and one from enteritis, both in infants. There were 10 deaths from forms of tubercular disease—rather a large proportion—and 8 from cancer. No deaths from measles or influenza. Eleven deaths were registered from the various pulmonary diseases, which is just about the average.

The water supply in the various villages in which schemes have been installed has been working satisfactorily, and there has been no complaint in these of any shortness of water.

For the most part the sewage schemes have been working satisfactorily, and with two exceptions there have been no complaints. Milton filter bed has been working for some years and its area is rather small, so it may shortly have to be enlarged. At Roade the filter bed has had to be renewed and it has since worked well. The filter beds at Great Houghton have been twice cleaned out during the year ; a complaint as to the effluent ditch is due in my opinion to the trampling and fouling by cattle.

Complaints have just lately been received as to the Hardingstone and Yardley Hastings schemes, and are now under the consideration of the Council. In the former case the contamination probably comes from a farm drain which enters the effluent drain after it has left the sewage farm, and this admits of easy rectification. In the Yardley Hastings case the pollution of the brook is undoubtedly caused by the existence of an overflow pipe in the drain before reaching the tanks. This ought never in the first place to have been allowed, but it is difficult to see how it can now be done away with and the whole scheme may have to be remodelled.

One new cottage has been built at Piddington ; one at present unoccupied at Hackleton ; and two also not yet occupied at Little Houghton.

A complaint was received during the year about the bad state of some cottages at Hackleton, but on close investigation there seemed no cause for the complaint, as with the exception of a few trivial defects which were easily remedied, they compared well with other cottages in the district.

The dairies and cowsheds are regularly inspected and are much cleaner and better ventilated than formerly. The Inspector tells me that arrangements for the milkers to wash their hands are in universal use. I am doubtful as to whether sufficient care is taken to cleanse the cows' udders before milking operations. No difficulties have been found in administering the Acts, but any suggestions we make are immediately carried out.

A Table is enclosed giving details as to the administration of the Factory and Workshop Act. Unfortunately, the large boot and shoe factory at Cooknoe has just been completely burnt down and will have to be entirely re-built. The number of inspections carried out is given in the Table, and whenever any complaint has been made it has been immediately rectified, so that there has been no difficulty experienced in the working of the Act. The fell-mongering factory in Hardingstone parish is working smoothly : there is now no pollution of the river, and the smells, though at times slightly prevalent, are not so bad as they were at one time. The bakehouses are clean and regularly white-washed, and there are no underground bakehouses.

No cases have occurred under the Midwives Act that require remedying. The supply of efficient and well trained midwives in the district is very limited.

I am, Gentlemen,

Yours truly,

G. H. PERCIVAL, M.B.,

Medical Officer of Health.

